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REFORM, REVOLUTION, AND REPRESSION:
THE TREBIZOND ARMENIANS IN THE 1890S

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The story of the Armenians of Trebizond (Trabzon) province during the 1890s is marked by sharp contrasts: economic growth in urban areas combined with extreme poverty in the villages, expanding educational and cultural opportunities hampered by restrictive measures instituted by the central and local governments, and aspirations for a just and egalitarian civil society destroyed with the utmost bloodshed and cruelty by reactionary authorities. A combination of circumstances gave Trebizond the distinction of becoming the site of the first outbreak of violence in the eastern provinces (*vilayets*) during the 1895 massacres. Prominent among the eyewitnesses to the bloodshed in Trebizond was the American missionary stationed there (Moses P. Parmelee, M.D.) as well as two young American diplomats who happened to be passing through the city on their way to consular posts in the interior (Robert S. Chilton, Jr. and William Dulany Hunter). Following a series of shattering events, the Armenians of Trebizond emerged at the end of the decade scarred and damaged but with remarkable resilience, as they prepared to rebuild community and institutions.

Several features, many derived from its geographical location, distinguished the Trebizond Armenian community, but the events that took place there in the 1890s cannot be viewed in isolation. On the contrary, they can be understood only within the context of the larger forces at work in the Ottoman Empire as a whole and in the overall Armenian community of which Trebizond constituted one small part. The nineteenth century has been characterized by what is called the "Armenian awakening," a process marked by a rise in the educational level of the people, by a flowering of culture, especially in literature, and by a growing national self-consciousness that manifested itself in many ways. Politically, the crowning achievement of this period came

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with adoption in 1863 of the Armenian "National Constitution," an event that introduced more democratic elements into the governance of the community.[1] Historians may disagree as to whether the Armenian renaissance took place because of, in spite of, or independent of, the general reform effort known as the *Tanzimat* in the Ottoman Empire, a movement that reached its culmination with the promulgation of an Ottoman constitution in 1876. That movement was shattered in the late 1870s with the empire's crushing defeat in the war with Russia, preceded by the accession to the throne of the conservative, if not reactionary, Sultan Abdul Hamid II.

The Ottoman defeat in the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-78 provided ample opportunity for the European powers to intervene in the affairs of Turkey, but competition and mutual jealousies precluded strong action. The international agreements that most affected the Armenians included the Cyprus Convention of 1878, whereby Great Britain guaranteed Turkey's eastern borders in return for the sultan's promise to introduce administrative reforms and concrete measures "for the protection of the Christian and other subjects of the Porte in these territories," as well as the right to control of the island of Cyprus as a guarantee (and a strategic naval base in the eastern Mediterranean opposite the Suez Canal). That same year in July, the Treaty of Berlin (signed by Great Britain, France, Russia, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Italy, and the Ottoman Empire) specified in Article 61 that the Ottoman government "undertakes to carry out, without further delay, the improvements and reforms demanded by local requirements in the provinces inhabited by Armenians, and to guarantee their security against the Circassians and Kurds."

These provisions gave Armenians hope for an amelioration of their tribulations. The practical effect, however, was to provide the European powers, especially Great Britain, with excuses to meddle in Ottoman affairs, much to the annoyance of the sultan, who nonetheless cleverly managed to exploit Great Power rivalries to his own advantage.[2] More ominously, the sultan interpreted the military and eco-

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[1] James Etmekjian, *The French Influence on the Western Armenian Renaissance, 1843-1915* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1964); Vartan Artinian, *The Armenian Constitutional System in the Ottoman Empire, 1839-1863* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1988).

[2] The standard literature on the Eastern Question and related Armenian Question in the nineteenth century includes Matthew S. Anderson, *The Eastern Question, 1774-1923* (London: St. Martin's Press, 1966); William L. Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1951), chs. 5, 7, 10; A.O. Sarkissian, *His-*

nomic weakness of his empire as justification to reassert the despotism of earlier rulers and to seek unity by emphasizing the Islamic character of the country. Abdul Hamid turned his back on the reform movement, whose aim had been to place the government in the hands of an educated, rational, and professionally trained elite. Instead, he instituted a personal autocratic rule in which loyalty to the sovereign was defined as the greatest good. At the same time, the sultan took advantage of new technology, particularly the telegraph, to assert strict control over regional and local officials in his far-flung empire and enforced his authority through an elaborate network of spies and agents—a situation that provided ample opportunity for intrigue and corruption.[3] For the Armenians, perhaps the most disastrous initiative taken by Abdul Hamid was the establishment of the *Hamidiye* regiments, formed by arming the Kurdish tribesmen ostensibly to guard the eastern borders of the empire but in practice setting loose a military force that robbed and looted Armenian villages at will, creating a reign of terror for the unarmed inhabitants in the region. All of these problems were exacerbated by depressed economic conditions, especially in rural areas.

The Ottoman constitution promulgated in 1876 was quickly suppressed in 1878, and with it the promise of an effective and equitable judicial, administrative, and tax system. The Armenians were faced with the unpalatable choice of appealing for the redress of their grievances to an unresponsive government or else turning to foreign powers for support—the latter a course that did not endear them to the Ottoman rulers. As the social and economic situation of the Armenians deteriorated, a generation of young people (many of them coming from outside of the Ottoman Empire) developed radical programs to overthrow the Ottoman yoke and to introduce some measure of autonomy for their Armenian compatriots. The great tragedy of the Armenian community in the Ottoman Empire during this period was its inability under the existing situation to develop a moderate plan of action. The community had long been divided between the interests of a small, wealthy, but politically insecure upper class and a growing middle class in the large cites, on the one hand, and the vast majority of the impoverished population living in the rural areas, on the other. The

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tory of the Armenian Question to 1885 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1938).

[3] Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909* (London: J.B. Tauris, 1998); Kemal H. Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith, and Community in the Late Ottoman State* (London: Oxford University Press, 2001).

Armenian Church, led by the Patriarch of Constantinople, attempted to play an enlightened leadership role, but it became trapped between an intractable government that only occasionally and begrudgingly responded to glaring abuses, and a Western-educated intelligentsia for whom the Church represented increasingly an obsequious and conservative force.

This situation provided an opportunity for Armenian radical and revolutionary groups, though small in numbers, to embark on bold and imaginative actions designed to attract maximum attention; their lofty idealism combined with flagrant pragmatism (they did not hesitate to use violence and intimidation to achieve their objectives) left many Armenians disconcerted and bewildered. The Ottoman government, for its part, responded with the utmost severity, making mass arrests with flimsy or no evidence of wrongdoing and leaving prisoners in unsanitary jails for long periods without filing formal charges, often inflicting torture to induce confessions. The government pretended and spread the word that Armenian activists represented a serious threat to the state; the effect being to stereotype the Armenians as seditious and to arouse the enmity of the Muslim population. One scholar has argued that the greatest single error of the Armenian revolutionary parties during the period of 1885 to 1908 was their mistaken assumption that the European powers would intervene in the Ottoman Empire in order to save the Armenian people from the clutches of Turkish misrule.[4] In fact, the two most interested powers, Great Britain and Russia, were too jealous of each other: Britain was satisfied with a weak Turkey that could nonetheless stand as a bulwark against Russian expansion, while Russia was content to stir up animosities but fearful that meaningful reforms in Turkey's eastern provinces would encourage Russia's Armenian subjects in the adjacent Caucasus region to seek greater rights and autonomy.[5]

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[4] Christopher J. Walker, *Armenia: The Survival of a Nation* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 127.

[5] See, for example, the comments of the Russian ambassador in Vienna, Prince A.B. Lobanov, to his British counterpart to the effect that any plan to grant autonomy to the Ottoman Armenians would place his government in a difficult position because the Russian Armenians, "who already give trouble enough, would take fire at once and formulate demands which it would be impossible to comply with." See Great Britain, Foreign Office Archives (cited hereafter as FO), FO 424 (Confidential Print, Turkey), vol. 178, "Further Correspondence Respecting Asiatic Turkey," no. 414, Sir E. Monson to the Earl of Kimberly, Vienna, Dec. 8, 1894.

Trebizond in the 1890s

The exposed geographic position of the city of Trebizond as a port on the Black Sea had a significant effect on the character and development of the local Armenians. This was a cosmopolitan community, with a number of minorities (in addition to Armenians, a large Greek population as well as Laz, Jews, Tatars, and others). Armenians made up a relatively small portion, numbering about 50,000 out of a total population estimated at more than one million in the vilayet.[6] Their relatively small numbers should not mask the importance of the Armenians, particularly in the city of Trebizond and to a lesser extent in Samsun, where their merchants and businessmen, along with the Greeks, dominated commerce. The trade passing through Trebizond had been growing rapidly since the middle of the century, and this trend continued well into the 1890s, until it was interrupted by the growing social and political unrest in the area. The fact that business, trade, and finance were concentrated in the hands of Greeks and Armenians, who nonetheless held little political power except within their own communities and who enjoyed only minimal representation in the courts and administration, presented a major element of instability.[7] The economic situation was very different in the countryside, where poverty was widespread and where conditions had steadily deteriorated since the Russo-Turkish war. Writing from the town of Ordu in 1894, American missionary Dr. M.P. Parmelee reported:

> The extreme prostration of business hinders every enterprise in which our people engage. In former years it has seemed as if the lowest depths had been reached. But lower depths have been found. To the

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[6] Population figures are taken from FO 424, vol. 183, "Further Correspondence Respecting Asiatic Turkey, July-September, 1895," no. 30 (May 30, 1895), based on Vital Cuinet, *La Turquie d'Asie*. General information on the Armenians of Trebizond province in the late nineteenth century can be found in Raymond H. Kévorkian and Paul B. Paboudjian, *Les Arméniens dans l'Empire ottoman à la veille du génocide* (Paris: Editions d'Arts et d'Histoire, 1992), pp. 179-206; and Hovakim Hovakimian, *Patmutiun Haykakan Pontosi* [History of Armenian Pontus] (Beirut: Mshak Press, 1967), pp. 105-33.

[7] See A. Üner Turgay, "Trade and Merchants in Nineteenth Century Trabzon: Elements of Ethnic Conflict," in Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis, eds., *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, 2 vols. (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1982), vol. 1, pp. 287-318. Turgay argues that the non-Muslim traders benefited from support by European powers, thus increasing social tensions.

> steady pressure of increasing taxation, and the extortions of unfeeling tax-gatherers, has been added a short harvest, so that, instead of large exports of corn and beans, the people of Ordoo now get their flour from Odessa and Marseilles. The same is true of Trebizond. Certainly a country which has nothing but agriculture to depend on is in a sorry case if it cannot feed itself. This is exactly the state of large portions of Turkey. [8]

The inhabitants of Trebizond were especially well informed concerning contemporary political currents both within the Ottoman Empire and abroad. Trade and commerce brought in foreign businessmen as well as diplomats. News of the latest events in the capital or from abroad quickly spread; here it was relatively easy for foreigners to visit or for the locals to go abroad—to Constantinople or to Batum and then on to Russia or Europe. The same was true to a lesser extent of the city of Samsun, which served as a major gateway to the interior provinces. Foreign contact intensified the flowering of Armenian culture, and a wealthy commercial class made it possible for Armenians to develop a broad network of educational and cultural institutions. Given Trebizond's exposed geographical position, it was perhaps inevitable that the area should become a center of Armenian political activity as well, with young activists easily moving in from abroad or hastily departing when necessary.

Thus, the first Armenian revolutionary party, the Armenakan, established a branch in Trebizond soon after its formation at Van in 1885. Political activity in the province intensified with the arrival in January 1890 of Ruben Khan-Azat (Nshan Karapetian). One of the seven Russian-Armenian idealistic students who in 1887 had founded the Hnchakian Revolutionary Party in Geneva, Khan-Azat managed to obtain a teaching position in one of the Armenian girls' schools in Trebizond. He found fertile ground among the educated population to preach the Hnchak ideals of a democratic, socialist, and autonomous Armenia and soon established a local committee through which party literature was clandestinely distributed. The party took advantage of Trebizond's port; for example, one member whose name is known only as Ohannes managed to become a coffee server on one of the Turkish

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[8] Archives of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (cited hereafter as ABC Archives), Houghton Library, Harvard University, Unit 5, The Near East (1817-1919), Western Turkey Mission, 16.9.3, vol. 18, Documents & Reports, no. 68, "Annual Report of the Trebizond Mission, 1894-1895."

ships navigating in the Black Sea, thus enabling the group to communicate abroad without difficulty. Khan-Azat and a fellow Hnchak, Hakob (Hagop) Meghavorian, traveled to Constantinople to participate in the Kum Kapu demonstration on July 15, 1890, during which Armenian protestors demanded reforms from the Turkish government. Subsequently tracked down by the police, the two Hnchaks fled from the country, Khan-Azat to Batum and Meghavorian to Europe.

The groundwork prepared by Khan-Azat in Trebizond early in 1890 facilitated the organizational efforts of two Russian-Armenian political activists, members of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, or Dashnaktsutiun, who arrived soon after. They were Simon Zavarian, one of the three intellectuals who had founded the Dashnaktsutiun in Tiflis in the summer of 1890, and Hovsep Arghutian, who as a member of the Young Armenia Society in Russia had been commissioned to investigate conditions in Turkish Armenia. The two Dashnakists were given a warm reception by segments of the local Armenian community, and most of the Hnchaks recruited by Khan-Azat entered into the new Dashnak organization. At the time, there was nothing unusual in this; the Dashnaktsutiun had been formed as a federation of Armenian revolutionaries, and the two parties became competitive and confrontational only after the Hnchaks withdrew from the Federation in 1891. Indeed Khan-Azat and Meghavorian had been the two Hnchak representatives present in Tiflis during the founding meeting of the Dashnaktsutiun, and they had helped to ensure that the Hnchaks would be part of the new organization. At that meeting in Tiflis, at the suggestion of Khan-Azat, Trebizond was designated as the headquarters for the Dashnaktsutiun (this was accepted as a compromise between the Hnchak center in Geneva and the Dashnak center in Tiflis). It soon proved impractical to have the headquarters in Trebizond or in any part of the Ottoman Empire and thus Tiflis remained the center. As the Turkish police clamped down on the Armenian revolutionaries, Zavarian was arrested and imprisoned. Since he was a subject of Russia, however, he was soon released and expelled, as was Arghutian.[9]

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[9] A description of the formation of the Armenian political parties, including the participation of Khan-Azat, Meghavorian, Zavarian, and Arghutian, is in Louise Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement: The Development of Armenian Political Parties through the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963), esp. pp. 146-58. Details about revolutionary activity in Trebizond in the 1890s are provided by Hovakimian, *Patmutiun Haykakan Pontosi*, pp. 134-38.

During this period, the Ottoman government reacted severely to what it considered sedition by the Armenian community. Throughout the empire police conducted wide-ranging interrogations; many Armenians were arrested and, without being informed of the charges against them, were thrown into prison. They languished there for weeks and months, not allowed to see friends and relatives and for all intents and purposes forgotten by the authorities. This situation was fraught with opportunities for abuse. In Trebizond, however, mistreatment was kept to a minimum, apparently because of the efficiency of the governor (*vali*) of the province, Kadri Bey (this according to the testimony of British Consul H.Z. Longworth). The competence of the Trebizond administration was corroborated by the American missionary Dr. Parmelee, who during an overland trip to attend a meeting in Constantinople in 1895 was appalled by conditions he encountered en route, particularly in the treatment of political prisoners. These unfortunate individuals, Parmelee reported, often were left incommunicado in their cells and in some cases died without anyone knowing of their condition until clergymen were notified of their death. "All this is in marked contrast with the treatment of prisoners in Trebizond, where I repeatedly visited them, knew their condition, and was able to aid them in many ways," Parmelee attributed the superior conditions in his region to the presence of a large number of foreign consuls posted there to encourage foreign trade.[10] Indeed, in order to carry out its responsibility under the Cyprus Convention and the Treaty of Berlin to oversee reforms in the empire, Britain had established several consulates in the eastern provinces, although (as one consul later admitted) this was not so much to oversee reforms as it was "on account of the importance of maintaining posts of observation on the Russian and Persian frontiers."[11] In any event, reports during this period by Consul Longworth are full of information about local conditions.

In early 1893, the British Ambassador in Constantinople, Sir Clare Ford, upon receiving reports of large numbers of Armenians unjustly arrested, directed the consuls to submit reports on the arrest and ill-treatment of Armenians within their districts. In response, Consul Longworth writing from Trebizond asserted that there were no Armenians political prisoners in the city of Trebizond, a circumstance he at-

[10] ABC Archives, 16.9.3, vol. 25, Letters, Parmelee, no. 60, May 1895.

[11] Robert Graves, *Storm Centres of the Near East: Personal Memories, 1879-1929* (London: Hutchinson, 1933), p. 110.

tributed to the administrative abilities of Kadri Bey. Longworth's report provides a revealing picture of the problems encountered by the local administration as the deteriorating political and economic conditions emboldened the Armenian revolutionaries. In one incident, a packet containing 320 copies of the newspaper *Hnchak*, published abroad by the party, was seized by the authorities in Trebizond. The packet, which also included some thirty letters enclosed in two envelopes for Armenians in Marsovan and Amasia, was in the care of the mate of the Pan-Hellenic steamer "Sparta" and was addressed to Arzoglou, the company's agent at Samsun, a young Greek whose mother was Armenian. Arzoglou denied any knowledge of the packet addressed to him. As an example of the moderation of Kadri Bey, Longworth reported that Arzoglou was not arrested but was placed under police surveillance pending his trial. (The incident was embarrassing to the United States, however, as Arzoglou was also serving as the U.S. consular agent in Samsun). "The consequence of the discovery has been the display of much greater vigilance on the part of the local authorities," Longworth wrote of the incident. "People are now more closely watched, and letters are intercepted." He again contrasted the moderation shown by Kadri Bey in this case with the aggressive actions of the officials in the neighboring province of Sivas, where 550 Armenians were imprisoned "on perhaps very frivolous political charges."[12]

In the face of the deteriorating political situation in the Turkish interior, Consul Longworth continued to praise Kadri Bey's governance in Trebizond. At the same time, he noted that local officials in the Ottoman Empire, in the age of the telegraph, were extremely limited in their powers. "Little or nothing," Longworth reported in early 1894, "can be attained of a durable nature without the sanction of the Porte [Ottoman government], or rather the Palace [Abdul Hamid]." He continued:

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[12] FO 424/175, "Further Correspondence Respecting Asiatic Turkey," encl. 4 in no. 44, March 28, 1893. Longworth's assessment of the government's "moderation" in the Arzoglou case changed two years later, when he reported that Arzoglou and his father, prominent merchants, had been subsequently exiled to Smyrna and financially ruined for no reason other than the fact that literature deemed revolutionary had been addressed to them. See FO 424/181, no. 119, Jan. 23, 1895. Longworth's jurisdiction included Sivas as well as Trebizond, but in the absence of a British representative in Sivas he depended for his information largely on the U.S. consul there, Dr. M.A. Jewett.

> The scope, in fact, of even an efficient Governor, is now-a-days in Turkey extremely limited, from a fear, it would seem, of his gaining undue popularity. Hampered in the initiative, he has been thus almost reduced to a mere automatic machine worked by wire from the capital, the manipulators of which are particularly remarkable for their dilatoriness, so much so that, as action is scarcely ever taken in the nick of time, the performance, as a rule, ends in failure.[13]

Not surprisingly, Longworth had little sympathy for the Hnchak party, because of what he described as the unrealistic nature of its goals and for its advocacy of "arson, robbery, and murder, as the only road to freedom," with a view of "enraging Moslems into such a massacre of the Christians as would . . . rouse the Powers to action in the interests of peace, humanity, and civilization." So outrageous were its tenants that "a firm and honest government would have no difficulty in suppressing such a movement." He concluded:

> There would be no baneful effects were it not for the baneful conduct of a certain number of corrupt and tyrannical agents. It has indeed become now not seditious, but the cry of the oppressed against their oppressors. Moderate despotism may be tolerable enough, but the unwarrantable conduct of cruel and relentless spies and officials must render life in many instances quite unbearable, restrained as the Armenians are, indoors and out of doors, in talking, writing, walking, and travelling. The persecution is foolish in the extreme, and as wicked as it is dangerous, for it may drive the unhappy people to despair and thus engender complications of a serious nature.[14]

If relative peace prevailed in Trebizond, Longworth noted, it was because of the extremely restrictive measures adopted by the local administration, which banned most organizational activity, including evening meetings of any kind and allowed only cultural and benevolent organizations to function.[15]

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[13] FO 424/178, no. 47, Jan. 31, 1894.

[14] Ibid. In the early 1890s the Hnchak leader Avetis Nazarbekian moved to London, where he and his family were under close surveillance by Scotland Yard, but he was not hampered in his activities in publishing the *Hnchak* newspaper. See, for example, the report in FO 424/181, no. 9, Jan. 5, 1895. Great Britain brushed aside appeals by the Turkish government to arrest the Hnchaks living in London. See FO 424/183, no. 159, Aug. 5, 1895.

[15] FO 424/178, no. 531, Dec. 17, 1894; Hovakimian, *Patmutiun Haykakan Pontosi*, pp. 139-40.

Beginning in 1895, however, a number of ominous incidents took place in Trebizond. In early January, after a three-month trial, five Armenian men were found guilty of revolutionary activity or of being accomplices, while another twelve were acquitted. The British consul sent a representative to the court, which was composed of a president, the public prosecutor, two Turkish members, one Greek member, and one Armenian member. The most serious case involved one Adom Aslanian, a native of Sivas arrested in Samsun, who confessed to being a revolutionary but used his court appearances to speak out vehemently about the absolute necessity for reforms and for the punishment of corrupt officials. At the end of the trial, Aslanian was sentenced to fifteen years imprisonment; two persons judged to be his accomplices were sentenced to ten years each, and two others from Charshamba were sentenced to five years each for distributing weapons. Longworth asserted that justice had been done in the trial, though aspects of it were troubling. The men had been arrested in early 1894 and had been held in jail in Samsun under appalling conditions for several months before being conveyed in the government cutter "Ineboli" for trial in Trebizond, where they were marched from the dock to prison heavily chained. There were many assertions of ill-treatment in the Samsun jail, as authorities sought to elicit false confessions.[16]

Another troubling incident centered around the Armenian primate of Trebizond, Very Reverend Eghishe Aivazian. In early 1895, Aivazian declined to sign a ceremonial letter expressing birthday congratulations to Sultan Abdul Hamid on the ground that it was up to the Patriarch of Constantinople, not to him, to perform this kind of function. His refusal aroused the suspicion of the governor, who in a complaint filed in Constantinople went on to criticize the allegedly inflammatory character of Aivazian's sermons. The governor held Aivazian responsible for the fact that a few months earlier two clergymen, Father Tatul Garmirian (Karmirian), pastor of the church in the village of Martil, in Charchamba, and Father Mikayel Tahmazian, pastor in the village of Chalgamlik, district of Unieh (Uniye; Unia), had been arrested on charges of belonging to a revolutionary committee and of keeping arms and munitions; several of their relatives and acquaintances had been detained in this connection.[17] The complaint by

[16] FO 424/181, no. 84, Jan. 11, 1895. Aslanian was subsequently shipped to Constantinople for further questioning. See FO 424/181, no. 198, Feb. 7, 1895.

[17] The Armenian Patriarch asserted, in a " Memorandum on the Situation of the

the governor was forwarded to the Armenian Patriarch in Constantinople, who asked Aivazian for an explanation. Under unclear circumstances, Reverend Aivazian resigned his position and planned to travel to Constantinople on May 25 but found himself faced with a group of about 500 Armenian demonstrators determined to prevent his departure—an event that further aroused the governor's suspicions. Receiving a message about the demonstration, Consul Longworth hurried to the prelacy and, according to his report, succeeded in dispersing the crowd and convincing Aivazian to remain in Trebizond. But the events had unnerved the primate, who two days later committed suicide by throwing himself from the top-storey window of the prelacy.[18]

These incidents in Trebizond represented local manifestation of the general lawlessness and unrest that were plaguing the empire during this period. The growing misery of the population, fueled by deteriorating economic conditions and broken promises of legal and administrative reform, encouraged the political activists to step up their activities in an effort to bolster their influence in the community. This in turn led the government to institute increasingly harsh measures against any indications of civic disobedience. The massacres of Armenians in the interior villages of Sasun in the fall of 1894 attracted the spotlight of the international press and shamed the European powers into diplomatic action. But the inability of the powers, particularly Great Britain and Russia, to agree on a policy confined most of their efforts to talk, not action, and again provided the sultan with the opportunity to play one power off against the other. Abdul Hamid was quick to label all petitions for the amelioration of conditions as machinations by foreign powers and as disloyalty on the part of the Armenians, rather than as efforts to reform and strengthen the empire. Local officials, eager to

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Armenians in the Vilayet of Trabizond" submitted to British Ambassador Philip Currie on February 13, 1895, that the two clergymen (Tatul and Mikayel) had been arrested after they had refused to pay bribes to local officials and that no evidence of their guilt for any offense had been presented. The patriarch reported that more than fifty Armenians were in prison in Trebizond, none of whom had committed any crime other than receiving newspapers published abroad or protesting against abuses and injustices. See FO 424/181, encl. 2 in no. 188, Feb. 1, 1895.

[18] The incident is described in Hovakimian, *Patmutiun Haykakan Pontosi*, pp. 143-45; FO 424/182, nos. 331-332, May 25 and 27, 1895. According to a local priest (Father Vahan), at Aivazian's funeral, the Russian consul pointed out that the late primate had always run to the English consul for advice and assistance. By turning their faces away from Russia and toward England, the Armenians were making a mistake they would regret, the Russian consul declared. See Hovakimian, p. 145.

curry favor with the authorities, used every pretext to show their loyalty by arresting Armenians and charging them with sedition, usually on little or no evidence; the use of torture to extract confessions was endemic. Occasionally, on petition from foreign powers, the sultan would pardon or exile a group of Armenian political prisoners. But without basic reform in the administrative and judicial system, the problems persisted and multiplied.

The Turmoil of October 1895

Matters came to a head in the fall of 1895, both in Constantinople and in Trebizond. In the capital, negotiations intensified between the Ottoman government and the European powers (especially Britain and Russia, who cooperated for a brief period in the aftermath of the Sasun massacre of Armenians in 1894) to develop a plan for reform in the administration of the eastern provinces. On September 30, Armenians in Constantinople staged a protest known as the Bab Ali demonstration to demand the implementation of such reforms. This initially peaceful action quickly turned violent and led to ten days of terror instituted by the government and directed against Armenians living in the capital, hundreds of whom locked themselves up in the Armenian churches. Reports of these events, often exaggerated or inaccurate, quickly reached Trebizond, where General Bahri Pasha, the former governor of Van, happened to be spending a few days on his way back to the capital. A notoriously corrupt and inept administrator, Bahri was an unpopular figure with the Armenians and had been severely criticized by the British before being forced to resign. On Wednesday, October 2, accompanied by the commander of the local regiment (Hamdi Pasha), the Persian consul-general (Rezi Khan), and the telegraph inspector (Haji Omer Effendi), Bahri Pasha was walking along the street on his way to the dock to catch the steamer to Constantinople when two young men sprang out of a narrow passage and directed several shots at him before managing to escape. Bahri Pasha received a flesh wound in the hip, while Hamdi Pasha was shot in the ankle—neither man being seriously injured. The two assailants, Misak Kasparian and Khachig Aslanian, youths of sixteen and seventeen years of age respec-

tively, managed to elude authorities and avoid arrest. News of the attack quickly spread throughout the province.[19]

In Trebizond, the situation became tense. Two days after the assassination attempt, on Friday evening, October 4, large bands of armed Muslims from neighboring villages took to the streets of the city, plundering Christian houses, breaking doors and windows, firing volleys in the streets, and terrifying inhabitants. According to the report of the French consul, a crowd of no fewer than 3,000 armed men gathered in the government square; the military force available to the authorities was completely inadequate to control such a mob, and it was only the firm stance taken by the governor that prevented the angry armed men from attacking the Christian quarters at that time.[20] Concerned about the ominous atmosphere, the next day (October 5) foreign consuls and vice consuls representing Russia, Persia, Austria, Italy, France, Greece, Belgium, and Spain, engaged five carriages and drove ostentatiously through the city to meet with the governor and local notables. "Though in plain clothes, some would like to think that our procession was as a spectacle imposing enough to calm the fears of the Christians and strike fear into the hearts of the Turks!" the British consul boasted. The governor assured his diplomatic visitors that he would take all necessary measures to insure public security, promising to have the troops reinforced, the gendarmerie increased, disreputable characters arrested, and the consulates, missions, and churches (where Armenians were taking refuge) effectively protected. Subsequently, however, as the local American missionary put it, the governor failed to keep a single one of his promises.[21] Either Longworth had been mistaken in his positive assessment of the Trebizond governor's competence, or the actions of Kadri Bey were being manipulated by outside forces.

On the following Monday, October 7, one of the Turkish men wounded during the Friday night's violence, a member of a prominent local family, died. The Muslim population widely assumed the death to be caused by Armenian violence, but some evidence suggests that the

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[19] Hovakimian, *Patmutiun Haykakan Pontosi*, pp. 148-51; FO 424/184, no. 128, Oct. 5, 1895.

[20] France, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, *Documents diplomatiques: Affaires arméniennes (supplément), 1895-1896* (Paris: Imp. Nationale, 1897), pt. 1, Events in Trebizond, no. 4, from Consul M. Cillière, Oct. 5, 1895.

[21] FO 424/184, no. 125, Oct. 5, 1895; ABC Archives, 16.9.3, 25/67, Parmelee, Letters, Oct. 14, 1895. The French consul also reported (*Documents diplomatiques*, no. 10, Oct. 15, 1895) that the governor had not kept his promises.

victim was caught inadvertently in the line of fire or, alternatively, that he was the losing party in a private, personal feud. Whatever the truth, tensions heightened, and that evening crowds of armed Muslims once again took to the streets but were prevented by the authorities from causing trouble. Thousands of Christians took refuge in foreign consulates and schools, hoping thereby to avoid any possible violence. At the same time, the governor, Kadri Bey, requested a meeting with representatives of the Armenian community during which he warned that he would be unable to continue to restrain the Muslim population unless the Armenians turned over the two young men who had attempted to assassinate Bahri Pasha. The governor brushed aside the protestations of the Armenian leaders that they did not know the whereabouts of the would-be assassins and that the entire community could not be held responsible for the actions of a couple of young hotheads.[22] The next day, Tuesday, October 8, an uneasy calm prevailed, and the businessmen opened their shops. Suddenly late in the morning violence broke out simultaneously in several parts of the city. The American missionary Parmelee, in a report widely quoted at the time, wrote:

> I ran to an upper window and saw men on every hand with guns and pistols and swords in their hands, and aiming and firing in different directions, one poor fellow falling just about our door. From every quarter came the sounds of the crash of arms. The attack had begun almost simultaneously in all parts of the town at about 11 o'clock a.m. and continued without interruption until 5 p.m. Every Armenian that was found on the streets was shot down—those fleeing were hunted up in their hiding places, and ruthlessly cut down.
>
> Houses were entered and the men cut down in the presence of their wives and children. The women and children were not hurt, except in a few instances, which seemed to be accidental. Harmless and quiet men were ruthlessly cut down though begging for mercy. . . . The frenzied rioters rushed through the market and carefully inquiring the shops of Armenians, attacked them with the greatest fury. If they were open they looted them, and carried off the booty. If they were shut, they had blacksmiths and locksmiths with them to open the shutters and doors and safes, from which they took bales of goods, handfuls of gold and other valuables. For hours that evening and the next morning the plunder was moving past my house. The anxiety and terror that prevailed may be conceived but cannot be described. . . . Not satisfied at killing and robbing, the maddened mob rented their spite on the

[22] Hovakimian, *Patmutiun Haykakan Pontosi,* pp. 151-52.

> dead, stripping them of clothing, mutilating them, and dragging them like dogs along the ground. Wagonload after wagonload was carried off to be buried in trenches or cast in the sea.[23]

All the foreign eyewitness accounts report that the police and soldiers, far from trying to stop the violence, either stood by and allowed the rioting to continue or else directed and participated in the action and took their share of the spoils. These eyewitnesses concluded that the massacre had been centrally planned and was not a spontaneous outbreak by the fact that it began in several parts of the city at the same time and ended at the same time. As additional evidence, they noted that the attacks carefully targeted Armenian men, while women and children, as well as Greek inhabitants and even Catholic Armenians or Armenians who were Russian subjects, had been excluded. In some cases Armenians were told to "surrender," as if they had been engaged in some act of rebellion, but those who tried to save themselves in this way were arrested and thrown into prison. This was in line with the government's policy of labeling Armenians as criminals or traitors. Privately, in a memo marked "strictly confidential," Consul Longworth later speculated that a "secret agency" had been responsible for the violence, exciting the Muslim population and paralyzing the local authorities. In a conclusion admittedly based on conjecture but providing the most plausible explanation of events, the British diplomat suggested that the chief instigators of the massacres had been the spies of the palace, who had been infesting the country.[24]

Fear of another outbreak of violence was widespread, and every kind of wild rumor spread. On Wednesday, October 9, for example, it was reported that a large body of armed Armenians gathered from the neighboring villages was preparing an attack on the city in revenge for the recent events. "The idea was grotesquely preposterous," Dr. Parmelee pointed out, given the fact that the Armenian villagers were few in number and in any event "abjectly poor and ignorant." It was later discovered that "the poor Armenian villagers were being driven from their homes or murdered, their houses plundered and burned, and the only gathering was that of a crowd of helpless, trembling, half-naked refugees at the monastery two miles from the city."[25] On October 10, it was

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[23] ABC Archives, 25/67, Parmelee, Letters, Oct. 14, 1895.

[24] FO 424/184, no. 275, Oct. 12, 1895; 424/184, no. 279, Oct. 26, 1895; 424/84, no. 538, Nov. 6, 1895.

[25] ABC Archives, 25/67, Parmelee, Letters, Oct. 14, 1895.

announced that the sultan had declared a state of siege in Trebizond and had assigned Major General Salib Pasha to take command of the city and conduct a court martial, which subsequently took place in great secrecy. News of the restoration of quiet in the capital, as well as the arrival in Trebizond harbor of the Russian gunboat "Teretz" on October 14, helped to bring about an uneasy calm.

From the city of Trebizond the massacre spread to other parts of the province. In the other large city, Samsun, armed Muslims threatened violence, but a firm and decisive governor was able to maintain order; prompt government action also prevented bloodshed in Ordu. These were the exceptions. In Gumushkhane, Armenians were massacred in the city and neighboring villages on October 25 and 26. In Charshamba (located in the sanjak of Samsun), troops sent in December to the village of Aghdja-Guney ostensibly to protect the people against brigands instead attacked the inhabitants, pillaged their homes, and desecrated the Armenian church. They profaned religious objects in the presence of the priest, whom they tied up, warning that all Armenians who did not convert to Islam would be treated in the same manner.[26] Of the devastation in rural areas, Parmelee reported:

> I have taken a list of sixteen villages, containing in all 1,330 Armenian houses, or not less than 8,000 souls, every one of which, with but one exception, was robbed and the greater part burned and the men, women, and children shot down and cut to pieces, or driven off or carried into captivity. One village, Varzahan, an interesting place with the ruins of three ancient churches, consisting of 100 Armenian houses, was completely wiped out of existence; a few escaped the flying bullets and got away, but the mass were butchered in cold blood. In Baiboort itself I was told by a widow just from there with her four small children, her husband being among the killed, that not more than twenty Armenian men were at large in the city. The rest were killed or in prison, or possibly a few in hiding.
>
> This terrible devastation was caused by Lazes from the coast and Kurds from the interior, assisted by neighboring Turks.[27]

Hundreds of Armenians had been arrested during and immediately after the bloodshed, but not a single Muslim was apprehended or even disarmed, causing Dr. Parmelee to note sarcastically: "Apparently all

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[26] FO 424/185, no. 295, Oct. 16, 1895; 424/186, no. 146, Jan. 3, 1896.
[27] ABC Archives, 25/69, Parmelee, Letters, Dec. 6, 1895.

this murder of peaceable and law-abiding subjects of the Sultan is no crime worthy of notice."[28] British Consul Longworth reported that the local government persisted in the "make belief" that there was an insurrectionary movement in Trebizond even though unable "to name a single Turk as killed or wounded by Armenians on the occasion of the outbreak."[29] He stressed the imperative for the government to conduct an impartial investigation in order to identify and punish the "ring leaders" of the violence. Otherwise "lawless characters" would take advantage of the situation, and the cycle of death and destruction would continue. Acceptance of a reform plan by the sultan (which took place on October 17, 1895) was all very well and good, but Longworth doubted that this action would "meet the exigencies of the situation in these parts," which required "quick and decisive action." He continued:

> The country is, no doubt, passing through a severe political crisis. . . . There seems to me only one way out of the difficulty. It is the dispatch here, without unnecessary delay, of a strong Commission of Inquiry, and the replacement of the troops here by such as have taken no part whatever in the disturbances.[30]

No commission of inquiry took place, and the bloodshed spread throughout the Armenian provinces, as the British consul had feared.[31] It was as if Sultan Abdul Hamid had been determined to demonstrate to the European powers that, however much they might pressure his government for reform, he was in the final analysis master of his realm and could do as he pleased within it, without having to answer to anyone inside or outside of his domain. It was intended also, perhaps, as a warning to Armenian reform advocates within the empire of the terrible consequences that could follow appeals to foreign governments for assistance.

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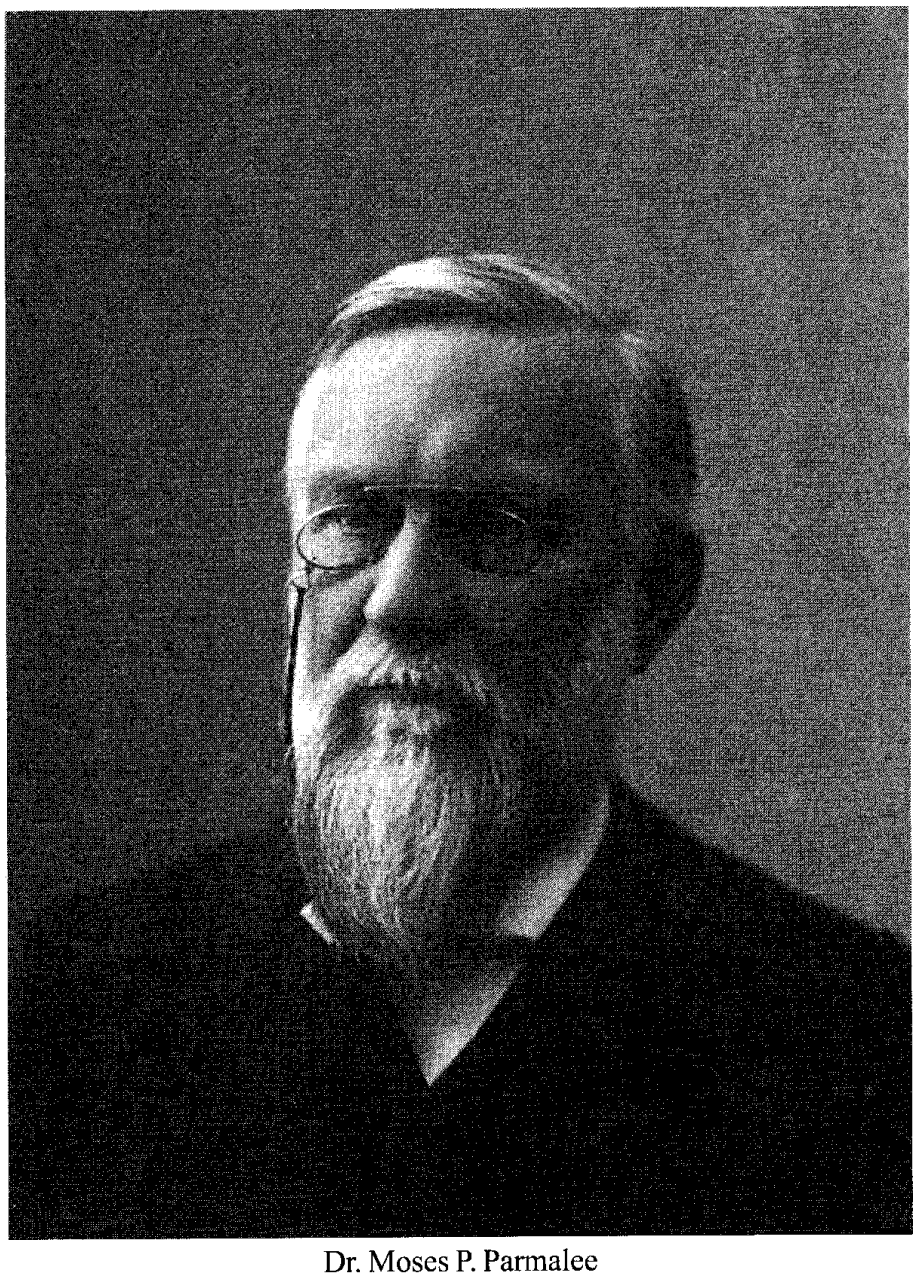
[28] Ibid., 25/67, Oct. 14, 1895.

[29] FO 424/184, no. 458, Nov. 2, 1895.

[30] Ibid., no. 370, Oct.21, 1895.

[31] On the 1895 massacres of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, see Vahakn Dadrian, *History of the Armenian Genocide: Ethnic Conflict from the Balkans to Anatolia to the Caucasus* (Providence, RI: Berghahn Books, 1995), pp. 113-71; Robert A. Melson, *Revolution and Genocide: On the Origins of the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 43-69; Walker, *Armenia*, pp. 121-73.



Dr. Moses P. Parmalee

Estimates of Armenian losses vary. The official figures, which included only those Armenians who lived in Trebizond, totaled 298 killed in the city; Western observers doubled the figure to include Armenians who happened to be in the city at the time. That the loss of life was not greater can be explained by the fact that Armenians had flocked to the protection of foreign consulates and institutions. During the height of the violence, the local French convent alone sheltered an estimated 2,000 to 3,000 people. In February 1896, the British consulate submitted a summary report of the losses sustained by Armenians in the districts (sanjaks) of Trebizond and Gumushkhane alone during the previous October: 507 killed and 5,197 emigrated; 1,510 homes and shops looted and 320 burned.[32]

American Accounts

The mayhem in Trebizond (as well as in Constantinople) shattered the belief that the presence of foreign consuls could somehow prevent the outbreak of violence and protect the population. Indeed, Longworth, who found himself outside the British consulate when the massacre erupted, was fired on at close range, but fortunately for him the gun did not go off; his interpreter and guard were nearly hit.[33] Caught in the middle of the melee were two young American junior diplomats who happened by pure chance to be in the city during these dreadful days, Robert S. Chilton, Jr. and William Dulany Hunter. For many years the missionary interests in the United States had lobbied for a greater American diplomatic presence in the Turkish interior, where the missionaries had established a wide network of schools, churches, and other institutions. Thus far they had succeeded only in the opening of the first American consulate in the Turkish interior, at Sivas, but the events of 1894 prompted the United States to establish two additional consulates and to assign Chilton to Erzerum and Hunter to Kharpert (Harput). The two men arrived in Constantinople on July 26, 1895. When repeated efforts to secure their recognition from the Ottoman government were rebuffed, they were sent out to their posts without the required official papers. Arriving in Trebizond on October 5, the day after the initial outbreak of violence, the two Americans were taken under the wing of the British consul and registered at the local Belle-

[32] FO 424/186, no. 221, Feb. 7, 1896.
[33] Ibid., no. 194, Oct. 9, 1895.

vue Hotel. On October 8, Chilton had just finished writing a report to his superiors in Constantinople when he was caught up in the turmoil and quickly scribbled the following postscript:

> While I was finishing the above a great commotion began outside of the hotel and a few minutes later men began running wildly in all directions and shots began to ring out on all sides. There was no mistaking their meaning. For an hour or more a regular battle has been raging and as I write everything is in fearful confusion and we are in the thick of it. Half a dozen of us are waiting for a favorable chance to cross over to the Persian Consulate directly opposite as it is evident that we have not a fair show here for our lives. I am taking my official papers and leaving everything else. The Turks have stopped killing for the moment and gone to looting and as the Judge [Alexander W. Terrell, U.S. Minister in Constantinople] expressed it, "hell is let loose." Hunter went out with Longworth's cavass [guard] an hour or more before the trouble began and I hope to God has found refuge in the British Consulate and will be safe. It looks now as if we were doomed unless assistance comes from outside.[34]

Indeed, Chilton was ready to leave the city with the next steamer, exclaiming, "Heaven knows what is in store for us tonight," but he could not find Hunter and lacked the necessary travel documents.[35] Chilton later reported that Hunter had been walking on the outskirts of town when the violence erupted and "with difficulty and danger made his way to the British Consulate, having been several times threatened with guns and knives."[36] Only with the assistance of Longworth's cavass had he been able to reach the consulate safely. Chilton was escorted that same day from the hotel to the British consulate and viewed the destruction: "I had to pass through the square and one of the principal streets of the city, where bands of armed men were still assembled, though their work was nearly completed. Dead bodies were scat-

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[34] US Archives, Record Group 59, General Records of the Department of State, Despatches from the U.S. Consulate in Constantinople, 1820-1906, vol. 20, no. 58 (Trebizond, Oct. 8, 1895). Chilton's subsequent reports from Trebizond (dated Oct. 9 to 24, 1895) are filed without numbers in the first section of Despatches from the U.S. Consuls in Erzerum.

[35] Ibid. Chilton despatch, Oct. 8, 1895.

[36] Ibid., Despatches from the U.S. Consuls in Erzerum, 1895-1904, vol. 1, Chilton to Secretary of State, Trebizond, Oct. 9, 1895.

tered over the streets all bearing fearful evidence of their cruel deaths."[37]

The British consulate had been threatened with an attack, and for the following several days a guard of ten to twelve Turkish soldiers was constantly maintained, while "Mr. Longworth and the rest of us are all armed and ready to make a good defense," Chilton reported. According to Longworth, the danger to the consulate resulted from rumors that the would-be assassins of Bahri Pasha had been harbored there and that Great Britain was "contemplating the formation of an independent Armenia." Chilton noted that he and Hunter had arrived in Trebizond without proper diplomatic papers but added that "even had I been fully qualified as a Consular officer I could not have done more than report the facts as I have done—the acts of all Consuls here being limited to that function during the disturbance."[38]

In subsequent reports, Chilton informed Washington that tension in the city remained high, with business generally suspended, guards maintained at the consulates, the streets patrolled by soldiers, and a renewed outbreak of violence feared at any time. Chilton expressed regret that except for the Russian gunboat "other vessels of war have not, or could not, be sent here at this time." Their presence, he believed, would be not only "a guarantee against further disturbances here" but would place the foreign representatives "in a position to insist upon the punishment of the guilty" and thus "avert trouble in other places."[39]

In regard to the arrest and trial by court martial of 300 to 400 Armenians, while not a single Turk had been arrested, Chilton wrote: "It will be a lasting disgrace to civilization if this travesty of justice is allowed to prevail. The only hope of fixing the responsibility for the affair and of punishing the guilty lies in a foreign commission backed by adequate force of arms."[40] After spending two weeks in the British consulate, Chilton and Hunter returned to their hotel. As the violence spread to nearby provinces and the Turkish government took no action to recognize the status of the two Americans, they were soon recalled.[41]

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[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid., Trebizond, Oct. 9, 11, 13, 1895; FO 424/184, no. 194, Oct. 9, 1895.

[39] U.S. Archives, RG 59, Despatches from the U.S. Consuls in Erzerum, vol. 1, Chilton despatch, Oct. 21, 1895.

[40] Ibid.

[41] U.S. Consulates were subsequently established in Erzerum in 1896 and Kharpert in 1900.

Dr. Moses Parmelee, along with most American missionaries in Turkey, was contemptuous of what he considered the weak diplomacy of the United States during this time. In December 1894, President Grover Cleveland had declined to take even the minor step of accepting the sultan's invitation to name an American representative to a commission assigned to investigate the Sasun massacres, on grounds that it might (in the words of Secretary of State Walter Q. Gresham) "lead the U.S. Government into complications which it was their policy to avoid."[42] Parmelee later wrote to Dr. James Barton at missionary headquarters in Boston in December 1897: "We are fortunate in having the English Consul to represent us here." Otherwise, he asserted, the missionaries would be "at the mercy of the limp style of American diplomacy," adding, "one's patriotism is sorely tried."[43] The missionary interests were especially critical of the Cleveland administration, which finally responded to pressure for a more active U.S. diplomacy by dispatching warships to the Mediterranean. The effort was poorly coordinated between the Department of State and Navy Department. The American naval officers assigned to this duty tended to accept the explanations provided to them by local Ottoman officials, and in any case there was little the ships could do to protect most of the American missionaries who were stationed in the interior provinces.[44]

In common with many American missionaries and their supporters, Parmelee was well connected politically. Home on furlough in early 1897, he managed to arrange a meeting with president-elect William McKinley. According to Parmelee's account, McKinley recognized the need for vigorous protection of American missionaries abroad and agreed to the elevation of the U.S. minister in Constantinople to the rank of ambassador.[45] The people of the United States in the 1890s were beginning to envision their nation as a world power, ready for overseas expansion, but their focus was set on strategic islands in the

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[42] Barbara J. Merguerian, "American Response to the Armenian Massacres of 1895: A Foreign Policy Dilemma," *Journal of Armenian Studies* 4:1-2 (1992): 54.

[43] ABC Archives 16.9.3, 25/106, Letters, Parmelee, Dec. 27, 1897.

[44] Ralph Elliott Cook, "United States and the Armenian Question, 1894-1924," Ph.D. Thesis, Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University, 1957, pp. 44-95; William N. Still, Jr., *American Sea Power in the Old World: The United States Navy in European and Near Eastern Waters, 1865-1917* (London: Greenwood Press, 1980), chs. 6 and 7; Merguerian, "American Response," pp. 53-83.

[45] ABC Archives 16.9.3, 25/74, Letters. Parmelee, Jan. 19, 1897; 25/75, Jan. 20, 1897; 25/76, Jan. 26, 1897.

Caribbean and the Pacific then belonging to Spain, and not on the Middle East.

The Consequences

In the wake of the Trebizond massacre, of the 400 or so Armenians imprisoned, all except thirty-five to forty were released. There is no indication that the government arrested or tried any Muslims. Many Armenians remained in prison until December 1896 when the sultan issued an amnesty for all political prisoners except those under sentence of death or notorious agitators.[46]

The Armenian losses precipitated a prompt and massive relief effort to save the survivors from hunger and exposure, with funds coming from the United States, Great Britain, Germany, France, and Switzerland. The greatest source of donations was the Duke of Westminster's Fund in London; accordingly, Consul H.Z. Longworth was placed in charge of the local committee directing the relief effort. Most of the distribution was carried out through Dr. Parmelee, assisted by the other American missionaries in the area; Parmelee continued to offer shelter in his home to approximately 200 refugees for several weeks; indeed, his home became a workshop for making quilts, thus providing employment for Armenian women and much needed protection from the cold. Longworth reported: "Through the good offices of the American missionaries, Dr. Parmelee and Mr. Crawford, the suffering of some 5,000 souls are being alleviated by the distribution of blankets, clothing and money."[47]

Under these circumstances, it is no wonder that many surviving Armenians who had the means emigrated to Russia, either permanently or until they considered it safe to return. Government regulations restricting the emigration of Armenians were inconsistent, and the exodus continued. Consul Longworth at the end of 1896 estimated that from the sanjak of Trebizond alone 7,600 Armenians had left the country. On the second anniversary of the massacres, Longworth reported the economy of the province to be in ruins, summarizing it as "a population reduced to penury, and an Administration encumbered by debts."

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[46] FO 424/185, no. 851, Dec. 16, 1895; 424/189, no. 115, Sept. 17, 1896; 424/191, encl. 5 in no. 95, Jan. 3, 1897.

[47] Ibid., 424/186, no. 221, Feb. 7, 1896; ABC Archives, 16.9.3, 25/70, Letters, Parmelee, Jan. 24, 1896.

The harsh blow aimed at the Armenian community had left all of the inhabitants of the province in economic ruin, including Turks, Greeks, Jews, Laz, and all the people who made up this multi-ethnic society.[48]

The social and economic setback was reflected in the cultural life of the Armenians in the province. An estimated 1,200 households in the city of Trebizond were reduced to 450 in 1896, growing slowly to an estimated 600 households in 1897 as villagers who lacked the means to get abroad moved into the urban area. To cite one measure of the destruction, in 1896 all of the Armenian schools remained closed except for one girls' school with three classes. With the assistance of Western funds and involvement of the Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Armenian Catholic Mekhitarists of Vienna, the community was gradually able to rebuild and even expand its institutions. According to the figures of the Patriarchate, in 1902 there were 24,000 Armenians living in the sanjak of Trebizond, 41 churches and 47 schools with 3,000 students. The Armenian theater, which had been the special pride of the community, rebounded and continued its pioneering programs. Of course, such a cultural revival must have been based on an economic revival as well, and indeed by the turn of the century the Armenian merchants and traders were once again assuming their prominent role in the local economy. The Armenians in Trebizond had improved their financial situation sufficiently to be in a position to assist their poorer compatriots in the interior.[49]

* * *

What conclusions may be drawn about the eventful decade of the 1890s in Trebizond? Certainly, Armenians had exhibited their ability to survive, to rise from the lowest depths of misery and to rebuild family, community, and society. On the other hand, no definitive conclusion concerning the death and destruction was made available, no independent inquiry was made, and none of the instigators and perpetrators of the massacres identified or punished. The myth that Armenian agitators were responsible for the carnage hardly explains the massive, widespread, and brutal response on the part of the government. Moreover, none of the underlying social and political factors that were tearing society apart had been meaningfully addressed. Sultan Abdul

[48] FO 424/189, no. 267, Nov. 18, 1896; 424/192, no. 182, Oct. 7, 1997.
[49] Hovakimian, *Patmutiun Haykakan Pontosi*, pp. 166-73.

Hamid had agreed to a reform plan in late 1895, but the attention of the world soon shifted to other areas and different problems, while the corrupt and inefficient Ottoman system continued intact. Armenians remained without meaningful political rights, thus creating a climate in which radical revolutionary groups attracted a following. The cycle of reform, revolution, and repression continued. Nothing, it seems, had been learned by the events of the 1890s in Trebizond, thus leaving the way open for the greater tragedy that was to unfold in the coming years.